

HANDSOME HARRY

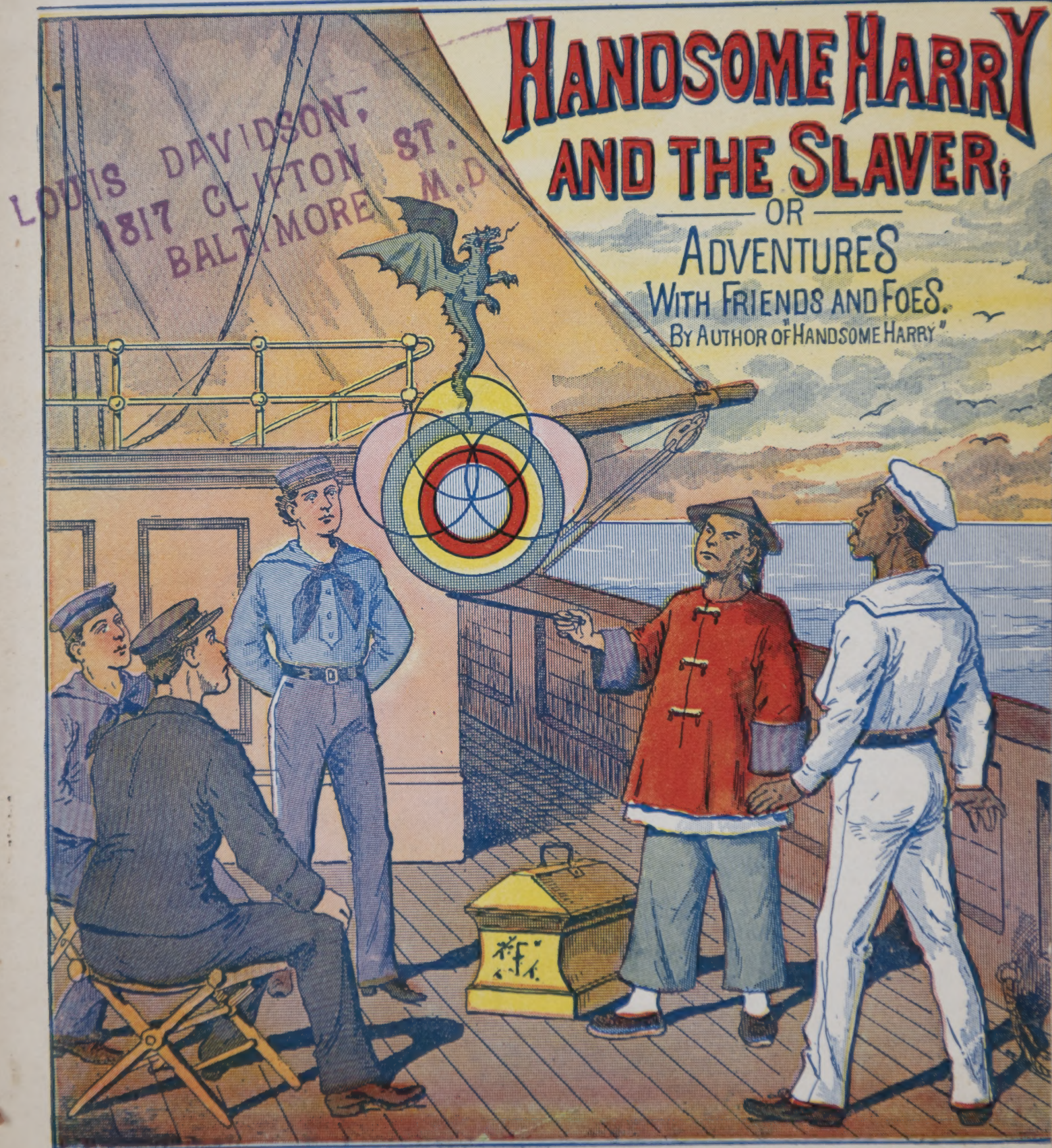
STORIES OF LAND AND SEA.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by Frank Tousey

No. 5.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 24, 1899.

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That conjuring box of Ching-Ching's was a great addition to the Belvedere, and often Ching-Ching would go aft and perform before Harry, Tom and Ira. But he never allowed mortal man—not even Samson—to inspect the apparatus.

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NEW YORK, February 24, 1899.

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HANDSOME HARRY AND THE SLAYER;

OR,

Adventures With Friends and Foes.

BY THE AUTHOR OF HANDSOME HARRY

LOUIS DAVIDSON

CHAPTER I.

SMILING THE LION.

CLIFTON ST. BALTIMORE M.D.

Daylight found the pirate captain and the Arab upon their way, followed by the sad cavalcade of prisoners and mules. Neither of the two men was in a talking mood, and for hours they walked without exchanging more than monosyllables, until a broad blue line uprose in the sky, and the sea was in sight.

Halting his mules and men under some trees, Schelmo and the pirate went forward to inspect the position. Even there the slave trade was very difficult to pursue, and no wise man attempted to "run a cargo" without taking all needful precautions.

A sandy hillock gave them a view of a lovely little bay well shielded by high cliffs, and under the lee of them was a long narrow vessel with bare poles.

"That is the vessel of our good friend, Cartouche," said Schelmo. "He does not expect us so soon. He and his crew are sleeping. I will arouse them."

The Arab fired off his fowling-piece, and this brought up the head of a man from below, who glanced quickly about him as if apprehending some danger. Schelmo was a good quarter of a mile away, but he succeeded in sending a shrill cry to the other's ears.

Leaping up, he revealed a close-cropped, sallow-complexioned Frenchman, dressed in

a greasy suit of sailor's clothes. He was smoking a cigarette, which he took from his mouth and waved in reply.

Schelmo then descended, and the pirate followed him. By the time they reached the shingle Cartouche and two men were there with a boat.

"Sacre! shall it be Schelmo?" cried the Frenchman. "Ah, and who is this? Brocken? Vell, vell, it is a velcome to my leetle ship."

The pirate bowed a little haughtily as Cartouche, with a genuine French shrug, bade him welcome. The Frenchman was a low caste villain, and he felt it.

"If," he said, "I should vun day call de Capen Brocken my friend, how very proud I shall be."

"But thou art friends," said the Arab.

"A leetle so," said Cartouche; "but the great Brocken plays a higher game than I do. He will not touch my hand."

"If that is what you want," said the pirate, loftily, "here is mine."

He held it out, and the Frenchman seized it as if it had been a prize.

"Friend and brother," he said, "come to my leetle ship."

They all got into the boat, and the men pulled them to the slaver. On climbing over the side a most offensive smell saluted the pirate's nostrils.

"Have you any on board?" he asked.

"A few—vary few," replied Cartouche, "and dey are Foolahs, which keep very bad—"

ly! Ah, I have to wait so long for de good Schelmo, dat I fear one or two die."

"And have you left the bodies in the hold?"

"Vat shall I take dem out for?" asked the Frenchman, elevating his shoulders and spreading out the palms of his hands; "it is vary dangerous work to go down among such raging devils."

"You could scarcely expect to find them angels," said the pirate, and turning round he walked aft.

"Shall we settle about our cargo?" asked Schelmo.

"It shall be so," replied the Frenchman. "Here?"

"No; down below."

They went down the ladder and entered the cabin which Cartouche used. Schelmo closed the door.

"Can we be overheard?" he said.

The Frenchman pointed to some list nailed round the door. Schelmo took a seat.

"Our friend above," he said.

"Yes, yes," returned the Frenchman, eagerly; "vat of him?"

"He wants a passage by your ship."

"Yes; and I must give him one," said Cartouche.

"By all means," said the Arab; "but let it be as a slave."

"Eh?" exclaimed the Frenchman, doubting what he heard.

"As a slave," repeated Schelmo; "he is no friend of thine or mine. He has lost all; he is hunted and almost tracked down. They will hang him shortly. Better let him live, and make money out of him."

"But who will buy him? He is white," said the Frenchman.

"I have here," said the Arab, producing a flask, "a potent dye which, once rubbed into the skin, can never be removed. It will make him black as night."

"But his hair, his tongue, good Schelmo?"

"In the south they will not stand for these; take him there."

"But how to secure him, Schelmo? He is a very lion."

"Leave it to me. Have you two strong, trusty men?"

"A dozen, good Schelmo."

"Bring them here."

Cartouche pressed a small knob in the wall, and the faint sound of a far-off bell immediately followed.

This brought a tall, burly fellow into the cabin, who gave a rough salute and asked what was wanted.

"Is Fabian on board?"

"Yes."

"Bring him here, with some good serviceable rope, Hans."

"Yes, sir."

He departed on his errand, and Schelmo proceeded to explain his scheme.

"See here," he said; "thou shalt send for Brocken, and he will come. I will stand here with this cloth, thy men there with the rope. He comes in, I toss the cloth over his head, thy men must be ready with the rope to bind him swiftly, and so he is taken. Say, is it well?"

"It is well," said Cartouche; and Hans and Fabian now came in.

Another man was wanted to take the message to the pirate, and he was summoned the same way as the first. The message was given, the man departed, and the conspirators took up their respective stations.

The bold footsteps of the pirate came down the ladder, and the door was thrust open with very little ceremony.

"You sent for me?" he said.

"Vell, yes," replied Cartouche; "you see, good captain——"

"Ah!" cried the pirate, and the rest of his utterance was only muffled sounds. He struggled fiercely but blindly, and Hans and Fabian secured him in a trice. Then Schelmo removed the cloth.

"So," said Cartouche, "you are in de toils."

The pirate met his look boldly and scornfully.

"Go on, you French poodle," he said.

Cartouche seemed to be direfully exasperated with this epithet, for he cut sundry capers peculiar to his countrymen. When he got a little calmer he recovered his address, the Arab looking on with a quietly amused face.

"Pshaw!" he said, "you a big pirate capen, you a leetle mouse! You want a passage in my leetle ship? you shall have vun. You turn up your nose at de stink of my hold;

ah! you shall smell him so vary much dat you smell not'ing else all de days of your life. But before you go you shall be painted, so that you shall be a man and a brother. Ha, ha! Cut off his clothes, Hans and Fabian, and I shall do de artistic work. I am very fond of painting."

CHAPTER II.

INSULT AND INJURY.

A blow upon the nose is to most persons a very serious thing, and those high up in the social scale strongly object to anything of the sort—not only on account of its painful sensations, but also on account of the disfigurement it leaves behind.

It will, therefore, be readily conceived that when King Matta received another nut upon the nose, within an inch of the spot previously assaulted, he rose up with great wrath, and, striking out, as persons in a passion often do, a little blindly, he hit the idol, Bettie, on one of its goggle-eyes, and knocked it into the fire.

Witta awoke again at the same moment, and, catching sight of his treasure in peril, he dragged it out, and with a dignified gesture stood it upright before the king.

"Bettie no like dat," he said. "De man dat burn Bettie burn too."

"Poof!" cried the king, and sent the image into the fire again with his foot. Witta gave a loud squeal, and all the people sprang to their feet. He then dragged out Bettie and stood it, blazing as it was, in the midst of them.

The yell of rage they uttered made the king's eyes roll horribly, and, rising to his feet, he tottered to the wise man, and fell upon his neck trembling.

But Witta refused to be pacified for the present, and pointed once again to the idol. The people shouted savagely, and King Matta's knees knocked together.

"Me berry good," he howled; "me love Bettie so much."

This amounted to a very handsome apology, and Witta embraced the king. Bettie's blazing head was blown out, and all the people proceeded to indulge in a dance of joy.

It was observed by Witta that some of the people as they danced occasionally gave convulsive skips, and rubbed various parts of their anatomy, and rolled their eyes very viciously at their neighbors at the same time. He wondered very much at this, but while he wondered something struck him on the crown of his head, and made him wink again.

"Wurra dat?" he muttered, looking about him. "If any fool play tricks wif de wise man I put Bettie at him."

A wild leap on the part of King Matta drew Witta's attention toward him, and he had the pleasure of seeing his majesty rub his hip with an energy which showed a considerable amount of pain. At the same moment something struck the king upon the shoulder and bounded off toward Witta.

The wise man caught and recognized the familiar fob-nut.

Now, nuts fall when they are ripe, but they do not come shooting down like shots out of a gun, and Witta not being quite so much of a fool as the Mandingoes generally, drew quietly back among the trees, and took a long and searching look aloft.

The result of this was that he caught sight of Ching-Ching's foot, and tracing it upward, he made out the outline of that worthy gentleman's body. Witta had a little fit of laughter, and after resolved to turn the presence of his friends to account.

Rushing forward, and with a diabolical shriek, he brought all to a stand-still. Then taking up an imposing attitude, he said:

"The king hab 'sulted poor Bettie, and all dis night it shall rain fob-nuts."

He had hardly uttered the words when a handful smote his majesty all over, and made him twist and whirl about like a teetotum the worse for drink. Another batch fell indiscriminately among the people, and skipping, with a little musical howling for accompaniment, became general.

King Matta was struck with a bright idea.

"P'r'aps it fine somewhere else," he cried.

"No," cried Witta, "it only rains nuts here; ebery whar else it pelt wif stones!"

The people promptly decided to obey the wise man, and put up with nuts; but their king, who had brought all this upon them, sank rapidly in their estimation. They

openly derided him in words, and one audacious old woman struck him in the back of the neck with a lump of turf.

But we must get on, for to linger in that African night's entertainment would make our story interminable. Ching-Ching and Samson kept the king and his people alive throughout the night, and they desisted when the dawn appeared.

Every one was worn out now, and those above and those below slept soundly, Ching-Ching and Samson wedged firmly in a fork of the tree.

Witta enjoyed a long and refreshing nap, but when he awoke the people were still asleep. Their king, however, was up, and, slowly walking round the fob-nut tree, looked up with a curious eye.

"Berry fine mornin'," said Witta.

"P'r'aps so," replied King Matta; "but, Witta, I think I see my mat up dere."

Yes, there was the precious mat, which Ching-Ching had slung just below him, dangling to and fro in the morning breeze.

A cold feeling came over the wise man, but he was quite equal to the occasion.

"I see him," he said, "but that not de mat."

"What am it den?" demanded the king.

"De ghost ob it," replied Witta, "and dat a sure sign we come upon de real mat afore de day out. If de king look too much at dat mat it bring him bad luck; de real mat fly away."

King Matta was not quite convinced, but he feared the wise man, whose powers over the superstitious Mandingoes were very great.

"Berry well," he said, calmly, "me look no more."

A rallying-call was now made, and the people, after eating some filthy stuff which they brought with them wrapped up in grass, formed a procession again.

"You find de mat to-day?" said the king to Witta.

"Me tink so," replied the wise man.

"Den you walk in front, and me come behind."

Witta was taken in for once, and made no objection to this arrangement. He took his place and they all moved on.

The king fell in behind and kept with them a few paces, but suddenly dropping behind a tree, he let the others go on without him.

"Quite enough dere," he said, "to look after de real mat. Me stop here and look after de ghost."

CHAPTER III.

THE FOREST STAMPEDE.

A sea of flame below and a cloud of red light above; trunks of trees standing like white, hot pillars in the midst of the conflagration; myriads of birds above wheeling for a time in affright, but doomed at last to drop into the midst of the fire and consumed in a moment. On every side, far over the plain and upon the mountain far away, lay the lurid light.

Such was the view as some hundreds of startled savages, drawn from their huts upon the hills, came to view the scene. It was sublime, terrific, terrible.

In the forest the effect was grand and the danger great. The lives of all the gallant band under Handsome Harry were in peril.

The wind had lulled and given them a rest from the fallen branches, but the calm brought another peril. The flames had now got such hold that everything within two hundred yards dried, then scorched, and finally broke out to add circumference to the fire.

The leaves scorched to ashes ere the flame came, the branches charred, and the great trunks cracked and snapped as the sap dried up. The very ground itself was turned to fuel.

Weary and almost broken down, the men under our hero hurried on, conscious that the fire was slowly but surely gaining on them. Once the rearmost felt his clothes scorching, and the shout he gave lent energy anew to those in front. The scorched man fell, but not to perish, for Harry and Tom each took an arm and helped him on his way.

The men, with voices feeble and thin, gave the helpless man a cheer, and offered their services to take their turn when needed.

"Thank you," replied Harry; "but keep on, there is no time to pause."

He could see that the fire now formed a semi-circle behind him, the sides advancing more quickly, as if bent upon closing around him and his gallant followers; so, "Haste!" he cried, and with strained eyes and aching sinews they strode along.

Death at last seemed inevitable, but at the perilous moment—just as it happens with you and I, dear reader, a thousand times in our lives—help came. The wind uprose once more, and the fire was turned upon a backward course again.

"Saved!" cried Harry. "Thank Heaven!"

His cry and hearty thanks were echoed by every man, and the weight of despair being removed from their shoulders, they kept on with comparatively elastic steps. Even the suffering man no longer needed assistance, but kept up easily with the rest.

"Man is a strange machine," mused Ira Staines. "A thought can give strength or weaken as it will."

The second storm of wind did not last long, but it gave them time to get well ahead, so as to get beyond any immediate danger. They heard it roaring behind, and, knowing that it was advancing, pressed on.

Have any of our readers ever felt the deadly terror arising from being pursued by that which threatened an awful death? Those who have will understand the feelings of these wanderers as they moved through the forest, every nerve and sinew strained to keep in advance of the army of fire fast advancing.

Hark! what is this?

A cry of joy from the lips of Tom True, who rushes on, and, for a moment, is lost to view; but the next he is seen again standing in open ground, and the forest is past.

A hasty thanksgiving drops from the lips of all, and then they turn and look behind.

Grand and awful panorama! sublime spectacle!

But hark! again; what is this roaring?

It rises above the sound of the flames, and comes with the noise of several waterfalls, each struggling for the mastery of sound upon their ears.

"Wild beasts!" cry half a dozen voices.

"The fire has invaded their lairs," said

Tom, "and in a few moments they will burst, wild and furious, upon the plain. Fly!"

Below them lay the Mandingoe village, with its mud walls, faintly brought out by the light of the fire. Here was at least some little chance of shelter, and toward it they all fled. Even the scorched seaman forgot his wounds and pain, and ran like a professional athlete striving for a prize.

The distance between the forest and the village was about two-thirds covered when the maddened beasts broke into the plain. There the roars, unbroken by the sheltering trees, acquired double force.

No common foe this to meet with. To stand would be madness and inevitable death. Harry felt that it was no shame to his manhood to fly, and, although he brought up the rear, fled with the rest.

The roar was deafening, and shrieks arose from the weaker animals as they succumbed to the rushing flames. Harry fancied that he could detect the footfalls and feel the hot breath of the brutes, as his men, with a strength and activity that seemed almost beyond that of mortal, leaped over the mud wall.

He followed with the bound of a deer when the hounds are at hand, and every man instinctively crouched down.

It was well they did so, for the denizens of the forest, in terrified procession, immediately followed. Lions, tigers, hyenas, jackals, zebras, deer, hares, rabbits, and a score others, dashed over in a jumbled mass, leaping clear of the men who lay close, some upon their faces, others on their backs, and others on their sides, spell-bound and unable to move.

At first they one and all anticipated a prompt and painful death, but the truth soon dawned upon them. Terror blinded the beasts to everything except their own peril; and beasts of the night, and beasts of the day, those accustomed to prey, and those who lived in hourly terror of being preyed upon, leaped and ran side by side, all without a thought save for the awful flames behind them.

It is strange how the human mind will speculate, even in moments of the most awful peril, and Harry wondered how it was

that all this mass of life had burst upon the scene in a moment, and not stirred ahead of the fire long before.

He called to mind, with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, the fact that the fire had approached crescent-shaped, with him and his men in the centre; but this crescent had evidently closed in, and the beasts who had fled in a line, were thus brought together en masse, and, but for the opportunity thus given to him to get ahead, he, and all with him, must have been enfolded, as it were, within their midst.

This was the correct solution of the whole affair. When terror spreads to numbers, the terror of a single creature is greater than it would be if the danger had to be faced alone—as witness a stampede in the field of battle, which bears with it hundreds of men brave enough to walk, at a pinch, up to the cannon's mouth and receive their quietus.

Many a Communist in Paris fled before the troops, but afterward walked to the slaughter-ground and received the bullets of his countrymen with a cigarette in his mouth.

A quarter of an hour, which seemed an age, elapsed before the beasts had all passed. Madly they tore on through the streets, some of them in their mad fright dashing through the mud huts as a circus rider goes through the paper-covered hoop. A few impaled themselves upon stakes, and lay groaning and bleeding; the rest fled on, and disappeared in the wood ahead, where we left King Matta.

"I wonder how many niggers are slaughtered," cried Ira Staines, sitting up and wiping his forehead, on which the perspiration lay like beads.

"I hear groans," said Tom. "Eh, Harry?"

"Not those of men," returned Harry; "they are more like the cries of beasts. But whatever it is, we have nothing to fear now."

They needed no light to guide them, for the fire was raging more fiercely than ever, and the deep red tinge was upon all things. Guided by it, they went from house to house, and found them empty, until they came to that which belonged to the king, and there a 77 astounding spectacle was revealed.

CHAPTER IV. 50

THE GHOST OF A MAT.

His Majesty, King of the Mandingoes, when he resolved to wait behind to secure his precious mat, had not the least notion that it was guarded by any living being, much less by such redoubtable persons as Samson and Ching-Ching.

Advancing to the foot of the tree, he took a long and steady look upward. Yes, there was the mat, or, if the ghost of it, the most substantial spectre he had ever set eyes on.

Daylight makes most men bold, even the most superstitious, and King Matta, abject as a man could be in the hours of darkness, felt himself very brave, indeed, under the light of day.

"Dat my mat," he thought, "and Witta berry big fool to talk ob ghosts. But how to get him down?"

He was no climber, having lived the life of ease which royalty claims as its due, and he could just as soon have straddled across the Atlantic as swarm up the massive tree before him.

Cunning came to his aid, and, looking about, he found a stout piece of stick, which he hurled into the tree. It went up and stuck there.

Next he tried a stone, which just missed the mat and disappeared. He stood and listened for its fall, but not a sound was heard.

"Berry strange," he thought; "war dat stone?"

He tried another and another, and although both went into the tree, neither returned.

His majesty was puzzled, and scratched his head of hair, which, in density and dirt, was very much like an old mop.

Reflection brought no solution to the mystery, as he sent up half a dozen more, and the whole of them joined their mysterious companions.

Then King Matta began to quake.

It must, indeed, be the ghost of the mat, which, by some spectral agency, absorbed everything cast at it. King Matta's knees knocked together, and, with tottering steps, he tried to fly.

But two steps had he taken, when down came the stick and all the stones, striking his woolly head; then followed the mat, and presently two tall objects dropped beside him and pinioned his arms.

"Me hold him, Sammy," said the voice of Ching-Ching, "while you get some creepers for binders"

"All right, Chingy," replied Samson, cheerfully.

The fury of the king was now something awful, and he would have made an effort to get free if he had been able to do so, but the arms of our friend Ching-Ching were to him like an iron hoop round a cask, and the king was as helpless as the staves.

Samson collected a lot of some sort of creeping plants, with which he appeared to be familiar, and, first stripping off the leaves, twisted them into a rough kind of rope. With this he bound the terrified king securely.

"Berry pretty," said a voice near them.

They turned and beheld Witta, with his Bettie tucked under his arm, in the style which many people carry an umbrella. He was looking at his captured king with a broad grin.

"All dis come ob t'rowing Bettie into de fire," he said.

The king rolled his eyes wrathfully upon the sacred image, but said nothing. In this he betrayed a remarkable prudence, for, in good sooth, he was in the camp of the enemy.

"We got him, Witta," said Ching-Ching.

"Den keep him," replied the wise man. "Eberybody better widout him."

King Matta groaned.

"I berry good friend ob yours, Witta," he said, "and me love Bettie so much dat me gib him bottle of rum."

"You no gib him rum," said Witta, scornfully; "nothing but kicks."

"It only my play," urged Matta.

"Den I hab a game ob de same sort," said Witta, and he immediately favored the mighty ruler of the Mandingoes with several hearty kicks, which extracted from him corresponding howls of anguish.

"You send me on," said Witta, "and you stop behind. Yah! you tink I berry big fool; but so I stop de people, and tell 'em

dat I tink de king dead, and so come back to see."

"Me not dead," groaned the king.

"But you soon will be," replied Witta; "so me send de people to de plain for to mourn de king. Dey go away a whole moon."

This was putting an extinguisher upon the last hope of the king, who had been fondly imagining that his people might return. It was the custom of the Mandingoes to mourn for a month in the plains when a king died, a style of grief which generally took the form of exuberant rejoicing over a brief term of liberty.

"Keep him," said Witta. "Me send de people away, den come back."

"Dear ole Witta," groaned King Matta, "best chap libing."

"Pooh! pough!" returned Witta. "Me know you for a berry selfish ole nigger—drink all de rum and t'row de bottle at Witta."

"Only once," urged the king.

"Keep de ole willain tight," said the wise man. And with his Bettie still under his arm he disappeared.

Prisoner and captors remained quiet for a little while, until a faint shout reached them. This brought a groan from his majesty, who knew that his subjects were setting out to mourn over his untimely death.

His feelings toward Witta may be partially imagined, but never described. With that wise and great man fully in his power, he would doubtless have added a few trifles to the long list of atrocities which find favor in savage lands.

Witta returned, and it was decided that they should all return to the village, there to await the return of Handsome Harry.

A more jubilant party—King Matta, of course, excepted—never trod beneath the shade of that or any other forest; and Ching-Ching, carried away by the lightness of his spirit, turned wild "wheels" as he went, and turned somersaults over low branches, besides many other wondrous feats of the class in which he excelled.

"Dis mornin'," he said, "jes remind me ob de day dat my farder was married."

Both Samson and Witta opened their eyes; but Ching-Ching, unheeding, continued:

"My farder, he said, "jes like ole King Matta dere, only he was bound in de chains ob love instead ob rope, and had by him side de lubliest-woman in all Pekin. De parson—berry much like ole Witta, only he had a lubly yaller skin, and the clothes ob a mandarin, go on in front wid de chief officer ob state, so much like Samson dat any man take dem for brudders right off. I fol-ler behind, singin' de merry lilly songs ob my native land, which wish de bride and bridegroom joy, and express de happiness dat we drink dere health with."

"Whar was your farder married?" asked Samson, who had followed the narrative with breathless interest.

"He was married," replied Ching-Ching, "on de top ob de emperor's chief pagoda, de place whar de emperor and his great favorites tie de happy knot."

"Was de emperor present?" asked Witta, in whose eye the light of skepticism rested.

"He was," said Ching-Ching, "and I sat on him knee while de ceremony going on."

"But Chingy——" said Samson.

"Yes, ole boy."

"How you manage to be at de marriage ob your farder? In de usual way de lilly ones——"

"Oh! yes, Samson," interrupted Ching-Ching, and a confused look spread over his face. But he speedily recovered, and continued with his usual affability. "Mine a berry strange life, Samson, and de least said 'bout some parts of it de berrer. Come up, you ole carcass!"

The latter part of his speech was addressed to King Matta, who had shown a disposition to lag behind. Ching-Ching gave him also a little help in the way of a violent jerk, which nearly threw that suffering monarch upon his nose.

"Of all de lazy ole villains," Ching-Ching continued, seeing that Samson was about to pursue the marriage question, "dat eber went out wif a pleasure-party, you are de worst."

"Whar de pleasure to me?" demanded King Matta, goaded into speech by his wroldgs.

"Yeh! you lazy ole rascal," was all Ching-Ching vouchsafed him.

Witta now added another burden to his

monarch by tying the image, Bettie, upon his back. The wise man was tired of his burden, and saw no reason why he should carry it when they had a prisoner to bear it, and, accordingly, it was tied upon the back of the Mandingoe king.

When they drew near the village Witta went forward to reconnoitre, and finding all safe, gave a mighty bellow to bring the others on. Then, like one of our own kings—Richard by name—the dark monarch re-entered his own capital a prisoner.

They marched him straight to his own house, which, as we have said, was the largest hut in the place. Inside, however, they found nothing but a few old boxes and a heap of dried grass in the corner.

"Now," said Witta, "whar you keep de rum?"

"Rum! me nebber had any," replied King Matta, vacantly. He saw that for the present, at least, his life was safe, and he grew cunning and bold.

"No rum?" said Ching-Ching.

"No, not a lilly drop," replied the king.

"Search the boxes, Samson."

Samson opened the boxes one after another—nothing there.

"He's got it somewhar," said Witta, looking about the room. "Come, swar, sar, dat you got no rum before Bettie."

He took the image from the king's back, and planted it before him.

"Now," he said, "swar you got no rum."

King Matta looked at the image, winked disdainfully, looked again, and took a solemn oath.

"I swar," he said, "dat I hab no rum."

Witta threw himself disdainfully upon the dry grass, but immediately leaped up with a shout. The clinking of glass followed.

"Bottles dar," said Ching-Ching, with a knowing shake of his head. "Oh, King Matta! what a berry big liar you are."

This was not a bad reproach coming from such a sincere follower of truth. The noble person addressed seemed to think it so, but he said nothing. He only groaned as Witta and Samson between them unearthed four bottles of the spirit.

In addition to this they discovered a box containing some dried meat and black bread, also under the hay; and from the fact of

their being found there, we may conclude that the Mandingoe king, mistrusting all his most loyal subjects, had been in the habit of sleeping upon his larder.

No such thoughts troubled our friends, who had all keen appetites, and partook of the good things with a relish, utterly disregarding the appealing looks of the rightful owner.

"You say you got none, derefore you hab none," said Ching-Ching, settling the question in an impromptu judicial manner; "so don't look dis way."

Ching-Ching had also added insult to injury by sitting upon the royal mat with an air of great dignity. Like a bold usurper, he sat upon the throne in the face of the rightful king.

The entire day was made a merry one, and as the night drew nigh King Matta, by the desire of Samson and Ching-Ching, was given drink and food. They were good enough to give his majesty just enough rum to fuddle his head, and as fuddled men are very often bold and arrogant, he forthwith became so.

"Berry bad job dis day's work for some ob you," he said.

Witta looked upon his deposed king with scorn. Samson and Ching-Ching seemed to be much amused.

"P'r'aps you 'member," continued the royal prisoner, "dat I am king—king ob de Mandingoe people, and dat when I lif' up my lilly finger all de people bow. Oh! dis day's work a berry bad job for you."

Ching-Ching laughed scornfully, and took a little more rum; Samson and Witta also indulged in a deep draught, which led to a song from the former in which the disastrous results of betraying a loving girl in China were ably portrayed.

The melody was of that cosmopolitan nature which shone in all the songs of Ching-Ching, and seemed to be fragments of innumerable melodies which he had picked up during what must have been a varied career. It consisted of about two hundred and forty verses, which he sang straight away, only pausing now and then when King Matta ventured to join the chorus.

"Close up," he said, with a dignity worthy

of a Roman emperor. "What do you mean by cuttin' in wif your bark?"

This abashed his majesty, and he was quiet during the rest of the melody, which was still proceeding when night came on.

The opening in the hut which served for a door looked in the opposite direction of the fire, and the light it cast was not strong enough to attract their attention for a long time; but soon it drew nearer, and Witta, in the midst of a chorus, abandoned his melody and sprang to his feet.

"Fire!" he cried.

Plains and woods on fire were not entirely unknown in that country, but they were rare, and the one at present in action was of sufficient proportions to excite the utmost terror.

Witta now betrayed the superstition he taught and affected to despise. Falling down before his Bettie,* he groveled in the utmost submission and fear, until Samson gave him a gentle kick, and bade him get up.

"Dis no time for snivelin'," he cried. "Stop here; me go to see how much de danger."

"He was absent but a few minutes, and when he returned he was as cool as if he had just stepped out for a little fresh air.

"No danger," he said; "de fire not reach here. Sit down."

The change was wonderful. All fear was banished, and Witta was the first to pitch Bettie into a corner, and propose to resume their mirth. He even proposed to stand King Matta on his head; and that, despite the entreaties of the wretched king, was done.

They tied his legs, and put him on his cranium in a corner, and left him there. Any ordinary white man would have been suffocated in a minute; but negroes—King Matta, of the Mandingoes included—seem to be so constituted that they are as well one end up as the other.

In this position he remained for a long time, with an inverted view of the drinking party making merry and singing. He and they could hear the roar of the fire; but this was soon supplemented by the second sound,

* "Bettie," in the Mandingoe tongue, stands for anything that is good.

which came from the wild beasts; and here savage instincts awoke their terrors again.

Samson knew the medley of sounds, and, with his keen ears, could separate the deep roar of the lion and tiger from the shriek of the jackal and the cries of other beasts driven from their lairs. He started up and went to the door.

At the same moment the vast herd of frightened creatures came over the mud wall into the village. There was no time for flight, scarce time for thought, and, crying out to his friends to look out for the coming danger, he threw himself upon the floor of the hut.

Ching-Ching and Witta followed his example, but the unfortunate King Matta remained upon his head, with his heels in the air, to face the new terror upside down.

He was powerless, and could only bear his position with as much fortitude as he could muster. Fear kept his eyes open, and, like an inverted heathen deity, he awaited the onslaught.

A terrific roar and a rush of wild beasts proclaimed them at hand. One moment more, and they went sweeping by, making the ground tremble beneath them.

Crash! A lion bounded through the side of the hut, and fell across Samson, lying stretched out panting. A tiger and a deer followed, and the three lay side by side, spellbound by the peril they had fled from.

On, on the vast herd went, until the village was clear of all except those left behind in the king's hut, and these lay passive until Handsome Harry and his men came up; and this was the strange sight which met their gaze:

King Matta upon his head, Ching-Ching and Witta lying stretched out, Samson with a full-grown lion lying above him. Who can wonder that Handsome Harry cried out, "Our friends are killed; let us avenge them!"

CHAPTER V. 51

KING MATTA RETURNS TO HIS PEOPLE.

A thrust from our hero's cutlass settled the tiger, and Tom and Ira finished the lion

between them. The deer, probably aroused from its stupor by these demonstrations, started up and flew away.

"Tank you, Massa Harry," said Ching-Ching, sitting up. "You allus on the spot when you berry much wanted. Oh, tank you!"

"If all the Belvedere's men were slain this man would get off free," said Harry. "Poor Samson."

"All right, Massa Harry," returned Samson; and, Witta coming to, a general round of congratulations was exchanged.

"And who have we here?" exclaimed Ira Staines. "Hallo, it's old Door-mat! I suppose we can come on to it now?"

"Wif my leave, sar," returned Ching-Ching, who was seated upon it fanning himself. "Dis mine now. I capture him after a long and terrible fight. Dis de spoils of war."

"Who did you fight with?" asked Tom.

"The whole of the Mandingoes," replied Ching-Ching. "We divide 'em into two parts. Samson lick de one and I take de oder. It sumfin like a fight, I 'sure you."

A more veracious account of the business was extracted from Samson, who had either imbibed a little less rum or was better able to stand it. There was a deal of laughter over it, and Harry's face for the time wore a brighter smile upon it than Tom had ever seen before.

"I suppose," he said, "that every drama of life has its underplot of low comedy, and these two fellows are ours. Fall in, there—we must get back to the ship—all but the two Mandingoes."

Witta turned palpably pale, and nearly fell over Bettie in the suddenness of the emotion with which he was afflicted.

"Massa Englese gen'leman," he said, "don't leave me behind."

"Oh, I have enough aggravating fools on board," replied Harry.

"But he saved my life and Chingy's, Massa Harry," softly whispered Samson.

"Then bring him; but this other fellow we will not have."

The "other fellow" was "King Matta," whose eyes twinkled as he thought of the cheerful prospect of being left behind. He resolved, as soon as he got free, to hasten

to his people and come back and destroy the enemy.

"Loose his hands," said Harry, "and let him go."

A sailor cut the rough cords which Samson had made, and his majesty, with a vindictive look, left the hut.

"Berrer keep him, sar," whispered Witta; "he rouse de people."

"Let them come," said Harry; "what can they do? Fall in, and back to the Belvedere."

A loud hurrah followed this command, and the gallant party, which had not lost a single man in all the perils which had beset their road, marched briskly into the wood in the direction of the shore.

It was not until they were out of sight that King Matta showed any remarkable activity, and then he struck out at a running pace in a northerly direction toward the mourning plain of his people, which he knew very well.

He was very much elated, for he was confident of success. Full five hundred men he could put into the field at once, and three times that number could easily be summoned from other villages. Revenge is sweet—particularly to the savage reared in the justice of wrong for wrong.

It is doubtful if he would have cared for the loss of anything except his mat. The white faces might have taken half his tribe, all his wives, and every particle of wool from his head, but the loss of that mat was more than he could bear.

I dare say that some wise people will laugh at the savage king, or go further, and doubt that such a weakness for a bundle of plaited grass could possibly exist. Will such please call to mind the tenacity with which great men have clung to pieces of ribbon, two-pennyworth of bronze in the form of a medal, and, what is less substantial, an empty title.

King Matta loved his mat, for it was woven of the grass of Panama, and was the only one he knew of in the country. It was his, and he alone had a right to stand or sit upon it, and strangers were not often permitted the privilege. As for his own people, they dare no more sit upon it, or put a foot

within a yard of it: than they dare put their heads into the mouth of a lion.

And yet he had been robbed of it by a base Chinee with a pigtail—an unbeliever in Bettie, and all the good things of the Mandingoe people.

Revenge!

That was the watchword that led him on till midnight, when he came in sight of his people performing the "Dance of Death" around a huge fire.

They had been at that sort of work for some time, and had brought their feelings to a pitch of frenzy, which found a vent in the wildest antics and the most diabolical howls.

"Just de spirit to be in," thought King Matta, rubbing his hands. "I gib 'em sumfin now."

"My people!" he cried; rushing into their midst and throwing up his arms.

The dancing ceased almost instanter, and the mob of brutes fell back, staring at their king with affrighted looks.

"My people!" he cried again.

"The king's spirit!" shouted one, and they all turned and fled.

In vain King Matta shouted, in vain he yelled and implored of them to return. Terror lent them wings, and one and all being in much better training than himself, he was speedily left behind.

The fury he felt before was nothing to what took possession of him now. He danced, he roared, and, exhausted at length, he sat down by the fire and wept.

After a little while he fell asleep, and was favored with a most awful nightmare, from which he awoke by the jangling of bells and the trampling of feet. A rope was thrown around him, and he was bound.

Looking up he beheld a face familiar to him—that of a trader to whom he had often sold slaves.

"Ab-del-Kier!" he cried.

The slave dealer nodded.

"You know me," pleaded King Matta; "me berry often sell you slabe—me, Matta, King of the Mandingoes."

"Thou hast made a mistake," replied Ab-del-Kier, shaking his head. "The Mandingoe people tell me that their king is dead."

"But dat king am me,"

"Matta was never without his mat—where is thine?"

"Me not got him."

"Then you are not Matta," replied the Arab coolly. "Proceed, there," and, bound as many a man he had sold in times gone by, King Matta was led away to slavery.

CHAPTER VI. 52

THE SLAVER.

The Belvedere was speeding its way, with a cloud of canvas swelling out before the breeze, bent upon touching the African coast further south, from when Harry proposed to strike into the Foolah country.

He had no hope of discovering his foe; at the best he only hoped to get some tidings of his whereabouts or the direction in which he had gone. At present he was quite in the dark, and, as usual, chafed under another threatened long delay.

Apart from this great trial of his life, he was as merry and good-natured as any—free with his purse, free with his arm, free in every way when a friend needed help, but the loss of his brother and the vexatious delay in the pursuit of his foes often made him hasty with those around him.

But he was loved none the less, for who was more ready to come forward and make handsome amends for the word spoken in anger, and in doing this he made no distinction between officers and men; and he was fairly idolized on board his craft.

Ching-Ching, the flatterer, soon lost the oily power of his tongue in his presence, and only at rare intervals presumed to offer him a compliment, but to others our friend remained much the same.

With Bill Grunt and old Cutten matters remained as before, and the spirit of antagonism toward Samson and Ching-Ching was lively as before, and with good reason, for no opportunity for a practical joke was ever allowed to slip by, and at times their lives were, as Bill often remarked, "like the lives of a werry dog."

The arrival of Witta was not at first received with any satisfaction; the men neither liked him nor the race from which he

sprung, but the wise man was indeed wise in his generation, and by persistent good humor and unqualified submission made his way to their good will.

He also, in conjunction with Ching-Ching and Samson, helped to lighten the monotony of the daily lives of the sailors. Witta was as active as any professional tumbler, and Ching-Ching was a little more so, we know. Samson—strong as a bull—made an excellent base for their performances, and the result was truly astounding.

That conjuring box of Ching's, too, was a great addition to the Belvedere, and sometimes in the evening he would go aft and perform before Harry, Tom and Ira—spinning the top and producing the orange-tree from the empty flower-pot, and so on, but he never once allowed mortal man—not even Samson—to inspect the apparatus.

"No, genlymen," he would say, "once de appleratus get touch by oder hands dan de true magician, all de magic fly away."

"Oh, you humbug," said Ira one night; "you and your magic be bothered."

"Massa Staines," replied Ching-Ching, "I'm berry much boffered by all ob you. You tink dat de tree in de flower-pot; suppose me bring him out ob a rum-cask?"

"I should very much like to see that," said Ira Staines.

"P'r'aps you would, sar," replied Ching-Ching, grinning all over; "but you won't. No; de genlymen dat believe not'ing deserve not'ing."

A fortnight of this sort of life sped away, and the only objects which broke the even tenor of their way were a few merchant vessels, which invariably, on perceiving the Belvedere, put the helm up and made off with all speed. Once a man-of-war showed above the horizon, but it either did not see our hero's craft, or had other work on hand which admitted of no delay, for it kept steadily upon its course, and in half an hour was gone.

At length, all grew impatient for something to do; men of action abhor a life of inactivity, and the Belvederes, from the captain to the cabin-boy, felt their blood growing sluggish for the want of a little fighting. One afternoon the looked-for excitement

Tom discovered a craft upon their lee, "sneaking" along in a suspicious manner, and Harry, on being apprised of it, gave orders to pursue. As soon as the Belvedere turned her bows in his direction, the stranger hoisted all canvas and made off.

"What is she?" asked Ira.

"Too low in her hull to be a merchantman," replied Tom, "and not well armed enough to be a pirate. A slaver, I reckon."

"Curse all slavers, Harry, say I!" rejoined Ira; "so here's after him."

The breeze was fresh, and in the favor of the Belvedere, and in half an hour it was apparent they were fast overhauling the stranger:

The slaver was a fast vessel, but the gallant Belvedere was faster.

Save for the desire he had to crush all such villains as slave-dealers, Harry took no interest in the pursuit and left the conducting of it to Tom and Ira.

Three or four of the guns were loaded, but the deck was not generally cleared for action—the slaver was not worth the trouble.

Samson was particularly furious when the slave question came about, for he had suffered by it, his father and he having been stolen from their native land and sold to a dealer who, in turn, separated them and sent one to America and the other heaven alone knows where. He never saw or heard of his father again.

"Chingy," he said, feeling the edge of his cutlass, "I jest want to get hold ob de capen ob de slaver, jest one minute."

"You will hab de chance, Sammy," replied Ching-Ching. "Wonder where Witta is?"

The wise man answered for himself by coming upon the deck, and, in reply to Ching-Ching, said that he had been down to ask Bettie to give the Belvedere good luck. Just a word about Bettie is here necessary. When Witta came on board it was night, and the wise man, being put into the cabin of Samson and Ching-Ching, had put away his idol unobserved by everybody. The men who had been on the expedition to the Mandingoe country forgot all about it, and Bill Grunt, Cutten and the others had

never seen it. We mention this, as something in the future hangs upon it.

"I tink dat you hab better ax sumfin better dan a wooden doll," said Ching-Ching, scornfully. "Cut him up into sticks."

Witta shook his head. The superstition he himself had raised was getting a stronger hold upon himself every day. The engineer was being hoist with his own petard.

The chance of escape for the slaver began to grow hopeless; the only hope he had lay in: the possibility—somewhat remote—of the wind dropping suddenly and rising again in the night, when he might go about and make an attempt to sheer off.

It was the ship of the Frenchman, Cartouche, and as that worthy walked the deck, feeling his case growing each moment worse, he betrayed all the excitability of his nation, and groaned and swore most villainously.

The crew were more phlegmatic, but they were very gloomy. Hans—a big, burly man—sat upon the deck, slowly sharpening a knife upon the side of his left foot.

"Sacre!" hissed Cartouche, pausing before him; "vat shall be de good of all dat?"

"I'll have a cut at him before I die," replied Hans.

"A cui at him—fah!" exclaimed the Frenchman. "You are big and strong—a giant of flesh—and he is but a boy; but he shall look at you and you shall fall down dead. It is the Belvedere."

"The best o' ships and the best o' men come to an end at last," growled Hans, "and I mean to have a stab at him."

"It will be madness to fight, my good Hans."

"Don't fight, then," said Hans, "but give in, and as soon as I get behind him I'll leave the Belvedere without a captain."

"Good! good!" cried Cartouche, who saw in this the prospect of revenge without risk to his own neck. "Ah, he shall pay dearly for robbing me of me leetle ship and her vary good cargo!"

"Chuck the cargo overboard!" growled Hans.

"No, no," returned Cartouche, with a cunning leer; "de captain of de Belvedere would never forgive dat. I deal in slaves,

but I do not murder—I am de merciful captain. Oh, so vary merciful!”

A gun from the Belvedere now called upon him to stop, and the merciful captain, who was also prudent, hauled his canvas in, and a boat from the Belvedere came alongside.

Ira Staines was in command, and with him were Samson and Ching-Ching. Samson was in anything but a humorous mood and his dark eyes glittered with fury.

Cartouche received them obsequiously, bowing himself fairly to the deck.

“Velcome,” he said, “to my leetle ship.”

“No doubt,” replied Ira, dryly. “Now, then, what’s your cargo?”

“Passengers,” replied Cartouche.

“White or black?”

“They shall be all black.”

“So I thought,” said Ira, composedly.

“Unwilling passengers. Now, I dare say that none of them move much about, and would be glad to be put ashore. Have you any objection?”

“None, sar.”

“Or to give up your command?”

“Oh, sar, I shall be proud for you to conduct my leetle ship.”

“What a very obliging party you are!”

Hans, who had mistaken Ira for our hero, drew nearer. Ching-Ching, who had been looking about him carelessly, became suddenly interested in his movements.

“As you are so polite,” continued Ira, “perhaps you will oblige me further.”

“Oh, sar, so vary pleased.”

“Then go below with your men, and don’t show your noses again until you are sent for.”

“Oh, sar, with pleasure.”

He bowed again, and Hans, now well behind Ira, raised his knife to strike. Ching-Ching sprang forward and, just as the blade grazed Ira’s skin, knocked the would-be murderer down.

“You very bad man,” said Ching-Ching, coolly sitting upon him. “Oh, what a bad farder you must hab had to learn such evil ways!”

Hans gave a violent kick, and Ching-Ching, putting a hand upon his throat, gave him a grip which made him gasp for breath.

“What’s all this about?” exclaimed Ira,

rubbing the spot where the knife had grazed his skin.

“Dis genlyman,” replied Ching-Ching, “want to make you a present ob dis knife,” holding it up; “but me so cubetous dat me lay hold on him.”

“I thank you, gentle Chingy,” said Ira, “and I shall not forget it. Now, you scoundrel, what do you mean by it?”

“Aye! vat you mean by it?”

“I mean that I meant to have your life!” scowled Hans, “and that he”—pointing to Cartouche—“knew that I was going to do it.”

“Vat you say, you liar?” demanded Cartouche.

“I say what I mean, and mean what I say,” replied Hans.

Cartouche rolled up his eyes, and Ira Staines gently smiled.

“Outraged virtue and good will embodied in a rascally Frenchman,” he said. “There are a pair of you. Now, my men, open the hatchway where the slaves are and pitch them down.”

Hans turned ghastly pale, and Cartouche fell upon his knees, shrieking.

“Not dat, not dat!” he cried; “spare me from dat!”

“Down with them!” said Ira, sternly; and two men lifting the hatchway, the others cast them down.

The moment the hatchway was lifted, a yell from below uprose. It was like the cry of the accursed bottomless pit; and Ira, who had no heart, as we know, stopped his ears.

“Poor wretches!” he murmured; “it would be dangerous to loose them now. They would not know friend from foe, and they must bear misery a while.”

He sent the boat back to the Belvedere for orders, and Harry desired him to keep in the course they had been pursuing, promising to show a light in the stern for him to follow by at night. Sail was accordingly hoisted, and Ira Staines, with twenty men and Samson and Ching-Ching, followed the gallant Belvedere.

That night two persons resolved to take advantage of the absence of the Chinaman and his friend to inspect their cabin.

These were Bill Grunt and Cutten; and,

having made friends with Witta, they plied him with rum until his brain became quite hazy, and he fell asleep. This desirable event coming off about midnight, the two conspirators stole softly toward the cabin.

"They've played many a joke on us," said old Cutten, "and we'll play one on 'em now. That'll make up for everything."

"We will," said Bill Grunt; "and we'll prig that conjuring box and see what is inside it. But go along easy; the capen mustn't 'ear about this sort of thing, as Samson in pertickler is a great favorite of his."

"Easy does it, then," said old Cutten, as he tried the door. It opened and they both went in.

"That's the box there in the corner," said Bill, holding up the lantern. "Good Lord! Murder!"

"What's the matter, Bill?"

"Look! look! The—the—Old Un!"

It was only poor Bettie, which Bill and Cutten had never seen, standing upon the top of the box, like some monstrous genii guarding a treasure; but in the dim light its uncouth proportions and goggle eyes looked simply awful.

Old Cutten looked—beheld—turned and fled, bellowing like a bull. As he tore up the companion he met Tom True, who was coming down to see what the row was about.

"Have you lost your senses?" he asked. "Is the Belvedere on fire?"

"Oh, help! save us!" gasped old Cutten. "It's the—the——"

"Yes, it is, sir," added Bill Grunt, coming up. "I allers said that Ching-Ching had dealings with him, and now he's there."

"Dealings with whom—and where is he?" demanded Tom.

"The—you know—the Evil One," said Bill, pointing below. "He's in the cabin as the capen set apart for them there two aggrawating willians."

"Give me the lantern," said Tom, "and let me have a look at him."

"Don't, sir," pleaded the boatswain; "it ain't safe."

"Give me the lantern."

"If you walley your life, sir," urged old Cutten, "don't put your nose inside the door."

Tom took hold of the lantern and marched

toward the cabin. Bill Grunt and old Cutten, losing all power in their legs, sat upon the stairs and trembled in the dark.

Intently they listened for the death-cry of Tom True.

"He must be killed outright," gasped Bill Grunt.

"A gasping sound came toward them. He was evidently in the grasp of the enemy and having the life choked out of him. Neither of them could move a limb to try to help him.

"Awful!" gasped the boatswain.

"It's terrible!" groaned old Cutten. "Shriek, Bill—shriek for help."

"Hold your row there," said Tom True, coming quietly back; "there's nothing to howl about. It is only a ghost. I've spoken to it, and I've ascertained who it is."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Bill; "who may it be?"

"Yes, Mr. True," added Cutten, "who is it?"

"The ghost of Ching-Ching's father," replied Tom. "Go back to your hammocks, and leave the cabin alone."

Neither of them had the slightest notion of returning to that awful place, and, hurrying to their hammocks, they got under the clothes, burying their very noses in fear. Ching-Ching's property for the present was safe.

CHAPTER VII.

CHOOSING A SERVANT.

The general opinion, in the minds of ignorant people, of the tribes of Africa is that the men are all of the negro type, with low foreheads, thick lips and flat noses; but this is an error. Manly beauty is not wanting in that sunny land, some of the races possessing exquisitely-moulded forms and features. The Foolahs, for instance, are as unlike the ordinary negro as possible, only resembling him in the color of the skin.

There were many Foolahs on board the slaver, and when a suitable spot was found for landing them, and they were commanded to come out of the hold, neither Handsome

Harry nor his officers were at all surprised to see several noble forms among the wretched band which leaped out wildly to embrace the light of day.

They were unarmed, and violence was very little to be feared, but the men insisted upon a guard of honor to protect their chief. This consisted of half a dozen men with drawn cutlasses.

As soon as the wretched slaves were all out Harry advanced with a smiling face and outstretched hand. They shrank back from him with terror, fearing treachery lurked beneath the friendly act; but one, more bold than the rest, stood still, and our hero laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Poor fellow," he said, "you look like a famished hound."

He made a sign to one of the men who was standing by with a bag of biscuit, and the man proceeded to serve out food. This sign of true friendship was unmistakable, and the dark sons of Africa drew nigh, and one by one prostrated themselves before Harry, and lightly touched his foot with their foreheads.

The last to advance was a tall black of symmetrical form, with dignity and grace in every movement. He bent the knee, took Harry's hand and kissed it.

"That's a smart fellow," said Tom True to Ira.

"He bery much like my——" began Ching-Ching.

"Oh, your father, of course," interrupted Tom. "Get out of the way!"

"No, sir," said Ching-Ching, mildly; "he not a bit like my fadder, but he de image ob my big brudder, who was de greatest warrer in all Pekin. I 'member one night, when de trumpet sound to tell us dat de enemy reproach——"

"What enemy?" asked Ira.

"Napolem, de French Jews'-harper," replied Ching-Ching. "He bring five hundred t'ousand men to Pekin, and march straight ober eberybody, until he meet my big brudder standing at de corner ob de street. 'Who am dis?' asked Napolem, turnin' so white he look like chalk image. 'Dat Ching-Ching's brudder,' whisper one ob him officers. Den Napolem get a kind ob staggers, and go round two or t'ree times

on one leg. 'Get back, some ob you,' he say, 'or I sha'n't hab a man left, and de glory ob France will be dubble up;' so he went back and Pekin was saved."

"This is the first time," said Ira, "that I ever heard of the Emperor Napoleon going to China."

"P'r'aps you don't beliebe me, sar?" asked Ching-Ching.

"I'm afraid I don't."

"Den, sar," said Ching-Ching, bowing low, "you ax my big brudder—when you meet him!"

Samson, who had not the least doubt as to Ching-Ching's veracity, was very much impressed with the narrative, and rather shuddered at the notion of meeting with such a redoubtable person as the brother of his friend; but Bill Grunt, in audible tones, expressed his unqualified disbelief in the whole thing.

"It's my opinion," he said, in a sort of loud soliloquy, "that that Chineese chap ain't got no brother; more, he ain't got no uncle; more, he ain't got no father or mother; and for 'arf a quid o' tobacco I'd take a oath that he never had one on 'em. Riddle me with grape-shot if I wouldn't!"

The soliloquy fell flat, as it should have done, upon the ears of the listeners, and Ching-Ching shook his right leg behind him in derision of the boatswain. It was a favorite action of his, very little in itself, but full of meaning.

A discovery was now made in the hold, and Cartouche and Hans, in a fainting condition, were brought upon deck. They had suffered very much, and had been most terribly mauled and trampled upon, but they were not injured fatally.

"Who are these?" asked Harry.

Ira explained.

"Put them in irons," said our hero; "but first give them a restorative. Treat them with all kindness, but justice must be done."

The other members of the crew, whom Harry looked upon as simply instruments of Cartouche, were offered service in the Belvedere, several vacancies having arisen through sickness. They gladly accepted, and the Belvedere, with its slaver consort, made toward the coast.

It was Harry's intention to land the na-

tives as near to their own particular country as possible; but it required a little deliberation as to what should be done with Cartouche and Hans.

He looked upon slave-dealers as the lowest class of ruffians on earth. There was nothing manly in their villainy; they did not risk much in their nefarious pursuits, and dealt only in weakness and misery.

Your true slave-dealer is invariably remorseless, too. He will not, when pursued, hesitate to put an end to his "cargo," if it can be done without fear of detection. He knows nothing of the value of life, and cares for no loss or suffering but his own.

He resolved to give them the choice of two things—the yard-arm, or to be put ashore with the black people. This was done, and they decided to be put ashore.

"But give me arms," pleaded Cartouche; "just von leettle gun to shoot. Ve are not natifs; ve shall starve vithout de gun."

This was reasonable; and the gun, with a fair amount of ammunition, was promised. Hans received the promise sullenly, but the eyes of Cartouche glittered.

Later on Ira came to Harry to make a request.

"Cap'n," he said, "I want a favor."

"Anything in reason I will give you," replied Harry.

"Thank you. You've seen that tall nigger?"

"Yes, I've noticed him."

"Very different from the rest."

"Very."

"Now, he don't belong to this part of Africa," said Ira; "I reckon that he comes hundreds of miles further north, and to put him ashore here would be like putting him in a nest of hornets."

"But I cannot go north," urged Harry.

"You may do so one day, and in the meantime I ask you to let me have the man for a servant."

"I thought you didn't care for attendance, Staines; that you were an independent man?"

"I've got the fancy on me to keep this fellow, cap'n; and, if you like, I'll board him myself."

"Oh, no," said Harry; "there is no lack of food on board the Belvedere."

"Then may he stay?"

"Certainly. Have you spoken to him yet?"

"Yes; but he hasn't answered me."

"Sulky?"

"No; as far as I can make it out, dumb."

"Poor fellow!"

Ira thanked his captain once more and retired. On deck he met with Tom, to whom he related what had taken place.

"Rather you than me," said Tom, shrugging his shoulders; "for, with all his quiet ways, a devil lies hidden beneath that dark skin."

"And many a devil lies under a white," replied Ira; "why should I trouble about it? I want the man, and I'm going to take him."

At length the African coast was sighted, and the natives were put ashore two clear hours before Hans and Cartouche were landed. They could not be trusted with arms, and the time mentioned gave them, as Ira said, "a clear run for it."

When it came to the turn of the two whites, they were put into a boat, and Harry himself went with it, accompanied by Samson and Ching-Ching. Samson had a rifle, and Ching-Ching carried an old-fashioned pistol, which he had loaded to the very muzzle with all sorts of missiles and combustibles.

Just before starting Ching-Ching had ventured to doubt the policy of giving arms to the Frenchman and his companion.

"He bery bad, Sammy," he said; "he try some game with dat gun."

"Den I try anoder game wif dis," returned Samson; and so the two kept an eye upon the Frenchman.

Utterly without treachery in his own nature, Harry was not prone to suspect it in others, and he put the Frenchman ashore with his rifle and powder, without once thinking that the weapon might be turned against him.

The boat pushed off, and the Frenchman seized the rifle. It was already loaded, and, cocking it, he took aim.

"One shot for my leettle ship," he said, firing.

Neither Samson nor Ching-Ching were prepared for so sudden an onslaught, and the shot took effect in Harry's shoulder. A

terrific shout of rage burst from the men who were rowing, and Cartouche uttered a yell of gratified malice.

It was his last cry on earth, for Samson's rifle and Ching-Ching's pistol sent out their deadly messengers, and, leaping up, Cartouche fell upon his face, shot through the heart.

Hans turned and fled to the forest, and they let him go. What fate he met with there was never known, for no man who knew him ever set eyes on or heard of him again.

CHAPTER VIII. *54*

A PEEP AT THE DARK VALLEY.

Harry lay insensible at the bottom of the boat, and at first they thought he was dead; but Samson, raising him in his brawny arms, found that he still breathed, and in hurried tones bade the men pull back to the Belvedere.

The exchange of shots and Harry's fall had been observed from the vessel, and an eager throng gathered to the side, each face a type of anxious woe.

"Is he much hurt?" was Tom's first question.

"Me no know," replied Samson, sorrowfully; "he bery still."

"I know something of wounds," said Ira; "but not much. Let me look at him."

They laid Harry down, and the American bent over him and made a rapid examination.

"This is too much for me," he said; "the bullet lies too deep for a crude hand like mine."

A touch upon his shoulder caused him to turn round, and he beheld the man he had chosen for his servant.

"Well," said Ira; "can you heal him?"

The man made a sign that he would try.

"Can you extract a bullet?"

The signal given signified "Yes."

"You have some instruments on board, I hope," said Ira to Tom.

"There is everything in the cabin, I believe," was Tom's reply.

They carried him down gently and laid him upon the couch. Tom dismissed all but himself and Ira, and bade Samson remain by the door. Samson took up his post, and Ching-Ching squatted down beside him. No jokes, no larking now, for their captain was going near to the Dark Valley of Death.

A splendid case of surgical instruments was found in a cupboard, and his clothing having been cut away, Ira's dark servant searched the wound skilfully.

"Near his heart," he signaled, "and very dangerous to probe."

"Can he live with it there?" asked Tom.

A shake of the head.

"Do you think you can extract it?"

The eyes of the man answered "Yes."

"Then do it."

With all the care and gentleness of a practised surgeon, the stranger proceeded with his task, and in a few minutes brought the bullet forth. It was followed by such a torrent of blood that it seemed as if his very life was flowing out. The skilful operator closed the wound with some lint and bound it tight.

The blood soaked through and a few drops trickled down the skin. The bands were drawn tighter and the blood stopped. A smile passed over the face of the operator.

"Saved?" asked Tom and Ira together.

"For the present, but he will need care," replied the man in dumb show. "At present he ought to be left to rest."

They understood him; and when he signaled that he should like to remain and watch over him, they made no demur.

"How Massa Harry now?" asked Samson, as they went out.

"Better," replied Tom, "but he must be kept quiet. You will see that nobody comes to disturb."

"Chingy and me do dat," said Samson. "Eh, Chingy?"

Ching-Ching looked very solemn and sat down against the door with the look of one determined not to rise from that seat until the sick man got well. Tom and Ira, smiling sadly, left the faithful guardians at their post.

"That's a strange fellow I've picked up, Tom," said Ira.

"A very clever one."

"He's got the skin of a nigger, but the ways of a European surgeon."

"Yes; perhaps he came from Europe."

"Hardly probable, Tom," said Ira, musing; "and yet I think I have seen the face before. There is something about the eyes which seem familiar. Somehow it seems to daunt me; and when he looks at me, he is the master and I am the man."

"You have made a fortunate choice, as it turns out, Ira."

"Yes, and I hope he will pull our noble leader through."

"What shall we do if we lose him?"

"Get knocked on the head as soon as possible," said Ira.

They walked up and down the deck sadly and the men slipped past them with light and careful footsteps, as if they feared to disturb the wounded hero below. Bill Grunt, not knowing who was on guard, went down to get a glimpse of his leader, but he came back in what sailors call "a brace of shakes," with a very flushed face.

"Mr. True," he said, "can't I have a peep at the cap'n?"

"Not yet," replied Tom; "it would do no good, and it might do harm."

"But couldn't I go on duty at the door?"

"There are two now, Grunt; that is enough. You are wanted here. Every man to his post."

An hour passed, and Ching-Ching came up to Tom to say that the "berry black doctor" wanted to see him. He went below for a few moments and speedily rejoined Ira.

"Worse," he said; "a dangerous inflammation has set in."

"Ira said nothing in reply, but looked out seaward and softly whistled. It was his way of concealing deep emotion.

Another hour and another message, and worse news from below.

"Unless a change takes place he will not live through the night."

"Oh, Tom," said Ira, "what is to be done?"

"I cannot tell," was Tom's despairing reply.

"He wants better medical aid."

"Where are we to get it?"

"Ah, Tom, where? Do you think it possible that—that—"

"What is in your mind, Ira?"

"Do you think it possible that that fellow is murdering him?"

"Who? What fellow?" exclaimed Tom.

"This savage—this doctor—whom we have so madly trusted."

"Good heavens, Ira! Whatever put that thought in your head?"

"I do not know," replied Ira; "I only know that the thought is here. The man is strange to me, yet I cannot but associate him with the past. Dark deeds, desperate crimes, fearful outrages, shrieks, cries and groans seemed to fill the air in faint echoes like the roaring of some distant waterfall when he is by. I was the first to trust the man, and yet I loathe him."

Another hour, and no better news; indeed, matters were worse. Handsome Harry was delirious.

"Now harkee, Tom," said Ira; "I am getting deeper into doubt. Can we not see him?"

"I did not ask this time," replied Tom, "supposing the usual restrictions to be upon us. Let us go below and ask."

They went below and the dark attendant made no objection to their visiting the patient. They entered and looked upon a sad, sad sight.

There was the tall, manly form which they had so often seen proudly erect lying prostrate, the mind, erewhile so keen and clear, clouded with delirium; the strong arm lying helpless by his side.

Tom and Ira were deeply distressed; the dark attendant calm and immovable. As they drew near to the sick couch he backed toward the door, as if to make a speedy exit in case of need.

"His very blood seems to be on fire," murmured Ira.

"Hark to his ravings!" said Tom.

"Blood—a sea of blood!" cried Harry; "and rivers with wrong and outrage written thereon! Who comes here? A mother holding a babe in her arms! See how the child bleeds! Foul murder has been done here! But who is bad enough to slaughter an infant? What next? Ha! an old man, with a deep gash in his breast, holding up his hands in prayer, and behind him comes a ruffian! Stay your murderous hand, vil-

lain! Great Father of Mercies, 'tis done! He is slain! Now I see a ship laden with a hundred souls sinking into the sea! Why do they not take to the boats? Why not, at least, plunge into the water and swim for it? No, they cannot! They are bound! What fiend did this work? What pit is deep enough for him? "

"Awful!" murmured Tom.

"They are not his deeds," said Ira, who was pale as the image of death. "He sees but the crimes of another."

The swarthy doctor who had attended to his wounds stood shuddering by the door.

"Wrong on wrong!" exclaimed Harry; "deed on deed! blood upon blood! I see the murderer now! He kneels, and tries to wash his trebly dyed hands in the brook; but the more he washes the deeper the stain! And the brook, too, that has turned to blood! A bright form rises on the other side, and cries: 'Be thou accursed?' Oh, villain, villain!"

"This will wear him to pieces," said Tom; "are there no means of giving him a rest? An opiate of some sort. Where is the chest?"

The swarthy doctor came up behind and took a bottle out of the chest. From this he poured a few drops in a wine-glass and, raising Harry's head, administered it.

The effect was electrical. The ravings ceased, and he sank down as quietly as a child in slumber.

"He knows what's what," whispered Ira.

"So it seems," returned Tom.

"A word with you, friend," said Ira, addressing the swarthy stranger. "Is there any hope for our friend here?"

A moment's pause, and then he held up a finger.

"One."

"Yes? What is it?"

The doctor pointed toward the west.

"A change of air?"

"Yes," was the dumb answer.

"In the Pacific?"

"Yes," was the reply again.

"It shall be done," said Tom; "but you remain here. One or the other of us will keep with him now."

"Who would dream that a few hours would so change a man?" murmured Ira, as

he sat down. "A noble man a few hours ago, a helpless creature now. A match for a dozen men last night; to-day a child with a bodkin might slaughter him. There he lies with the work he has set himself unfulfilled—a lesson to me and all men that man proposes and God disposes."

CHAPTER IX. 55

A FOE, YET FRIEND.

Many months have passed since the events recorded in our last chapter, and spring has fallen upon an island in the upper part of the Pacific, a rich, fertile spot, and veritably a gem of the sea.

There are bright belts of sand around by the sea, and, inland, rich hills, fertile valleys, waterfalls and bubbling brooks, fruits, flowers and trees, birds with gay plumage and insects of every color under the sun.

This is a large island, big enough to give shelter to a frightened people, who one morning saw a monster, with huge canvas wings, come gliding up, and land several strange-looking men upon their shores. The people looked on, peering from behind bushes, and beheld one of their number carried to a nook upon a hill which gave him shelter from the rougher winds of the sea.

"It is their god!" they cried; "he is too great to walk," and the simple-minded people turned and fled and hid themselves in the forest.

There they skulked, trembling, for many weeks, until one of their number, bolder than the rest, went down to the sea.

Toward nightfall he came running back to say that the monster had folded her wings and all the men she had brought upon her back were lying about the sands.

"They have come to eat us," said the simple savage, and the whole body fairly skeedaddled to the other side of the island, leaving Handsome Harry and his men masters of the field, quite unconscious of the victory they had achieved.

For a long time our hero's life hung upon a thread, but watchful care on the part of his friends brought him round.

The services of the black doctor had long been dispensed with, as both Tom and Ira mistrusted him.

He accepted their mistrust with the immovable phlegm he showed in other matters, and retired within himself, mute and gloomy.

The men disliked him, and he, on his part, held aloof from them, wandering about the sands meditating, and at night slept beneath a tree.

He was nominally Ira's servant, but Ira never asked for his services, and he never volunteered to do a single thing.

Once Bill Grunt, touched by the loneliness of the man, went up and volunteered a few general remarks.

He was rewarded for his kindness with a haughty stare, which, he informed his worthy friend Cutten, "froze his marrer."

From that time no man addressed him, his rations were put aside where he could get them, but in the strict sense of the word he lived alone.

Ching-Ching entertained a thought of playing a practical joke upon him, and tarred the tree he was in the habit of leaning against.

The dumb man merely cut in the tar the word "Beware!" and shifted to another tree.

"Berrer let him be, eh, Sammy?" he said.

"Much berrer," replied Samson; "bery bad look in him eye."

So they let him alone like the rest, and amused themselves in other ways; that is, they gave Mr. William Grunt and Cutten a very hard time of it.

It was a glorious morning when Harry was first able to emerge from his tent and stroll about a little, leaning on Tom's arm.

He was sadly changed, so thin and pale that neither Don Salvo nor Juanita would have recognized the handsome hero who had made himself and the Belvedere famous.

"It is something to stand erect again, Tom," he said; "one never feels quite like a man lying down."

"No," replied Tom, "it is always a position in which one feels at a disadvantage. But you will soon be all right now, Harry."

"The Frenchman nearly finished me, though, Tom,"

"He did, but Ching Ching and Samson quite finished him."

"Where are they?"

"Down there by the red shingle and having, as usual, a row with Bill Grunt."

"They are as great a pest to him as ever, I suppose?"

"I've got three volumes of complaints which I have promised to lay before you," replied Tom, laughing; "but I am sure I cannot say what you are to do with them."

"I will give them some work as soon as I get stronger," said Harry, with a meaning look.

"You have not given up the old pursuit?"

"No, and never will," returned Harry. "Why do you ask it of me?"

"I did not ask you to do it," said Tom; "but do you not think it useless?"

"No; we might say that of everything difficult to attain. Half-hearted men halt at a half-way house; whole-hearted men go on to the end."

"I suppose you are right, Harry."

"By the way, Tom," said our hero, "you were telling me that I owe much to one of the Africans, who skilfully extracted the ball. What has become of him?"

"He is hereabouts," replied Tom. "I saw him a few moments ago under his favorite tree. I sometimes think we have done the man an injustice in being suspicious of him."

"I fear you have," said Harry; "but I should like to see him for a moment or two."

"I will watch for his return and summon him," said Tom; "and now, here come two friends to offer their congratulations."

The two friends were Samson and Ching-Ching; the latter, to do honor to the occasion, had got the best side of his clothes—that with the characters upon it—outermost.

"Oh, Massa Harry!" cried Samson, running forward, "me bery glad to see dis, for neber did me speck to see you walk again."

"Good old Samson!" said Harry, kindly, and held out his hand. Samson took it, and the tears of joy swelled into the faithful fellow's eyes.

"How are you, Ching-Ching?" asked Harry, nodding to our friend, who was in-

dulging in a series of spasmodic wriggles and bows.

"Me much berrer," replied Ching-Ching.

"Have you been ill, too?" asked Harry, in surprise.

"How should Ching-Ching be well when him Massa Harry ill?" said Ching-Ching, reproachfully. "Oh, sar, my feelings is much too fine to be well when you are sick."

"Your feelin's ain't too fine when there's anything laying about which don't belong to you," said the voice of Bill Grunt, and the boatswain joined the crowd.

"Ah, Grunt, I'm glad to see you."

"It's a pleasure for me to look on ye agen, and I've come to ax when the men may take the liberty to give yer a look?"

"To-morrow, Grunt. This being my first day out, I can't bear much."

"I feel de crowd ob visitors a lilly fatiguing," said Ching-Ching, fanning himself and looking full at Bill Grunt. "I not be able to talk to dem for a day or two."

"I'll talk to you one day," replied Bill, wrathfully; "and you, too—so you needn't grin."

"Wurra de matter wif me?" asked Samson.

"Oh, you're as bad as him, and he's wuss than you!" replied Bill. "It goes agen reason for a man to hope to get through his work when he have two varmints like you buz-knacking about him."

"Who's buff-knacking?" demanded the invalid Ching-Ching, raising his voice.

"Who put a peck an a 'arf o' live shrimps into my hammock?" demanded Bill.

"Did you, Sammy?" asked Ching-Ching of his friend.

"Oh, no, Chingy," replied Samson, with rolling eyes.

"Den why you come and 'cuse a innercent young man?" said Ching-Ching, mildly addressing himself to the exasperated boatswain. "Dis show dat de bump of morally depravity bery wrong wif you."

"Did I say he did it?" cried Bill. "Do you think I'll go for to accuse him, and you—you—you yallar himmage standin' by. And there's poor old Cutten, as you never can let alone. Only t'other day, when he was enjoying a nap aboard, with his wooden leg

flush with the deck, you went and druv a staple over it, and there he was fixed."

"Who say I do dat?" demanded Ching-Ching.

"Why, he did—he was woke up by the 'ammering, and seed you running away."

"Oh, no, no!" said Ching-Ching, mildly; "we see dat somebody fix him leg, and we bery sorry. 'Sammy,' says I. 'Yes, Chingy,' says he. 'Let us go for help,' says I. And den we run, and de ungrateful ole rascal wake up and fix de blame on us."

"P'r'aps you didn't let him down the hatchway, and nigh break his neck?" demanded Bill.

"He was a trespasser den," said Ching-Ching; "wasn't he, Sammy?"

"Bery much trespasser, Chingy," replied that veracious and confirmatory supporter of the Chinaman.

"What do you mean by a trespasser?" asked Harry, who, with Tom, had hard work to keep his countenance.

"Let me tell the story, sir," said Bill Grunt, "and if you don't say that it's as black a bit o' work as ever you heard on, my name ain't Bill Grunt. Well, gemmen, you must know as I opened the fore hatchway to sweeten the hold, and these two chaps puts two tubs close by and a plank across, making a kind o' seat, just on the edge o' the hatchway, and there they sot talkin' and grinnin', like the asses they are, for an hour or so, ater which they goes to the foremast and sit there."

"He bery trufeful," interposed Ching-Ching; "we bof sit dere, didn't we, Sammy?"

"We did, Chingy," confirmed Samson.

"Oh, yes, in course yer did," said Bill Grunt, with an expression of bottled wrath about his face. "Well, gemmen, when them two parties—which I ain't a-goin' to lower myself by callin' 'em by their proper names—when these two wacated the seat Cutten ses to me, 'Bill, let's go and set down.' 'Down with you,' ses I, 'and have a pipe,' so we goes forrard and sets down, and puts the pipe on."

"Yes," said Ching-Ching, with his eyes up, "dey hab a smoke, didn't 'em, Sammy?"

"Dey did, a lilly smoke," said Samson, and gave vent to his feelings in a stifled chuckle.

"We had just lighted our pipes," continued Bill Grunt, savagely, "and Cutten was a-gettin' his into full blaze, when hup went one o' the tubs, and I felt myself chucked forrard onto my face on the deck; that saved me, but poor old Cutten went t'other way. I seed him go over, with his wooden leg up like a hinfant mast, and then down he goes into the hold. I sees the tub rollin' and I ketched hold of it, and there was a cross bit o' wood with a string tied to it, runnin' through the bung-hole."

"I beliebe," said Ching-Ching, "dat dere was a lilly bit ob string sticking to de tub."

"It was a plot laid ag'in us, and you know it," said Bill Grunt, warmly, "and it's a marcy you didn't break that poor old man's neck. Now, I'll just tell you——"

"Stop a minute," interposed Tom True. "You must excuse me, Grunt, but your narrative is so powerful that I am afraid it is too much for our worthy captain here. Suppose you give us the rest to-morrow, and the next day we will hear the defence."

"Massa Tom a bery good judge," said Samson.

"And a bery good judy," added Ching-Ching.

"Axing your pardon, gemmen," said Bill Grunt, touching his forelock, "but when I gets on the hinjuries I've suffered I gets carried away a bit."

"Carried away from de trufe," said Ching-Ching, with an expressive shake of the head; "ah, Missa Grunt, whateber your wrongs, neber tell no lies."

Bill Grunt scorned to answer him, and went his way. Tom sent Ching-Ching for the dumb doctor, who was sauntering below, Samson, imagining that he would be better away, went, too.

Ching-Ching delivered his message, and for a moment the swarthy doctor trembled, but he braced himself up, and with a quick, firm step ascended the slope in which Harry stood. Arriving in front of our hero, he made a low obeisance, and stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"I have to thank you," said Harry, "for your prompt and able attention to my wound. I have good reason to believe that without your timely aid I should have died."

The dumb man bowed and spread out his

hands, as if deprecating all allusion to himself.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked Harry kindly; "is there any place you would wish to be taken to?"

A shake of the head.

"Your country or your friends?"

The swarthy face looked for a moment at Harry, and he saw that the man before him had neither country nor friends in the wide world. He signed to him that he might go.

"I do not understand the man," said Harry, when he and Tom were left alone. "He is black in skin, but white in feature, and it seems to me that I have seen that face before."

"Ira was remarking the same," said Tom.

"Yes," said Harry, musing, "I have seen that face before; but where?"

And the dark stranger, as he walked down the hill, half uttered this thought:

"If he had looked at me a moment longer I must have betrayed myself."

CHAPTER X. *56*

IRA KNOWS HIS BIRD.

The want of action which the restless spirits of the Belvedere found so trying did not long exist, for one evening, just upon sunset, Bill Grunt reported a sail in the horizon, and Harry was upon the alert in a moment.

But three days had elapsed since he had walked forth, but even that short time had worked wonders, and the longing, if not the ability, to handle a cutlass again sprang into his breast.

The words, "A sail!" were to him like the trumpeted blast to an old war-horse, and, rising from his couch within the tent, he insisted upon going upon the deck of the Belvedere. Tom and Ira endeavored to dissuade him, but all in vain.

"It may be only a passing merchantman," said Tom, "and to-morrow may show us a clear sea again."

"Or, say that it is a war vessel," added Ira: "it cannot have seen us, and now that night has fallen—darkness came as he

spoke—"they are not likely to linger about here."

"If there is no danger," replied Harry, "then matters will be much as they are, but should there be any, would it be right for me to be away? Sick or well, weak or strong, my post in the hour of danger is upon that deck."

So he went, and the men wanted to receive him with an ovation, but he would not have it.

"Silence fore and aft," he said; "I know your hearts too well to need a shout. It is best to be cautious in the presence of an enemy whose strength is unknown."

A strict watch was kept all night, and the deck was prepared for action as quietly as possible.

It was a wise precaution, for the dawn might show them the stranger within a mile of them.

And when the dawn came there he was, a vessel armed to the teeth, anchored about two-miles away with the Spanish colors flying at the masthead.

The Spaniard seemed to be taken by surprise, for such a hullabaloo as never was uprose when the Belvedere stood out in the morning light. Men ran to and fro, officers stood upon the upper deck and swore, the magazine was opened, the guns run out, and mighty preparations generally carried out.

"That's a filibustering sort of chap," said Ira. "He is in too much of a hurry to be a regular dealer in powder and shot."

"I intend to stop his filibustering," returned Harry, who was sitting upon a camp-stool, with Samson and Ching-Ching, armed to their teeth, behind him.

In obedience to his command, the Belvedere struck out her sails and bore down upon the Spanish craft, which was at least double their size.

This audacious movement raised a little more commotion on board the stranger, who, without any preliminary blank cartridge, began wildly to fire solid shot.

The iron missiles struck the water before and they struck it behind—now on this side, now on that; but never a one struck the Belvedere.

"Shall we reply, sir?" asked Bill Grunt,

who, next to Ching-Ching and all Chinamen, hated Spaniards most of all living things.

"No hurry," returned Harry; "we must get considerably nearer before they can hit us."

"This is getting humorous," said Ira, as he watched the fountains of water leaping up as the shot struck. "Why don't they try to miss us, and then they might do a little mischief?"

Tom laughed and rolled himself a cigarette.

"Give me a light, Ira," he said. "Thank you. Fellows like that never hit anything—whether they try it or not."

"That was nearer the mark," said Ira, as a shot struck the sea before them, and, rising, bounded clean over the Belvedere.

The Spaniard now ceased firing for a moment, and the canvas of his mainsail fell out.

It was now time for Harry to begin.

"Grunt," he said, "cut that away."

The old boatswain, who had his guns ready, pointed the bow gun and fired.

The shot struck the mast just above the sail, and the terrified Spaniards who were aloft endeavoring to set it tumbled down upon the deck like a lot of monkeys from a cocoanut tree.

More raving and swearing from the officers, and signs of a deal of kicking going on. This induced some of them to attempt the ascent again.

But now the bow gun was loaded once more, and a better aim cut the huge sail clean away and brought it down with a crash, burying half the officers in its folds.

Judging from the sounds which followed, one might reasonably have assumed that, at least, half the duffers on board were being roasted alive.

"Oh, these fellows are hardly worth powder and shot," said Harry. "Run up and call upon them to surrender."

But the Spaniards, if not particularly brave, are very treacherous, and their officers, readily interpreting the silence of the Belvedere, hauled down their flag in token of defeat.

The next moment they passed word for the men on the side of the vessel next the

believe to take good aim and be ready to fire.

The officers and some of the crew stood still with affected listlessness, and it appeared as if they were all ready to surrender; but it was not so. They had their cue and were only practising a ruse which had been successful on more than one occasion.

"I am sure I do not know what to do with the craft when I have got it," said Harry. "Bother the fool, why did he not keep out of my way?"

"Missa Harry," said Ching-Ching, softly. "Well?"

"If you hab no good for dat vessel, gib him to Samson and me."

"But what on earth would you fellows do with it?"

"Oh, we sail him, Missa Harry."

"But you know nothing about sailing."

"We hab men on board to do de work," said Ching-Ching; "and Samson and me sit on old King Matta's mat and gib orders. I t'ink dat I make Missa Grunt de fust ossifer, if he promise to be bery good."

Bill overheard this remark and was heard to mutter:

"That might he be flayed and skinned, roasted and biled, if ever he sailed under a yuller-mugged, cod's headed Chinaman."

"Well, I must think it over," said Harry, smiling; "there are, of course, other men who must be considered in the matter of prize money."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BITER BIT.

Ira Staines was standing a little apart from the group while this conversation was going on, looking curiously at the Spanish craft.

He had no downright suspicion of anything wrong, but there were two or three things which he did not exactly like.

"They are too demonstrative," he said aloud; "too abject even for the half-bred filibustering Spaniards, and there is too much system in the grouping of both officers and men—and yet, no, it is impossible—he has struck his colors and he is our prize."

"You are wrong," said a voice close to his ear; "the fellow means treachery."

Ira turned with a startled look upon the speaker, and saw by his side the swarthy doctor who had appeared to be dumb.

But the man was no longer a savage in his eyes—no longer a member of a race of savages; the voice had betrayed all, and Ira knew him.

"Hal!" he said. "It is you, Captain Brocken!"

The wretched man staggered back a pace and looked at him with affrighted horror.

"Hush!" he whispered hoarsely; "do not betray me. I—I—am an unarmed man and can do no wrong."

Ira was sorely troubled.

It was neither the time nor the place to expose the man, but he felt that he could not permit him to remain on board.

He knew the pirate captain well, and had seen him perform many a relentless and cruel deed; how, then, could he trust him now?

"Come this way," he said, hurriedly, and the pair drew a little further apart.

"We have been comrades," continued Ira, "and I am loath to betray any man, especially when such odds are against him. If, as you have said, that fellow means treachery, a big fight will follow. In that case you must manage to get away in the commotion. If he yields, then you must seize the first opportunity to go ashore, and hide in the wood until we have left these shores."

"Are those the only alternatives you can give me?" asked the pirate.

"The only ones. Choose between them and prompt exposure."

The pirate reflected for a moment with a saddened face.

Ira remarked that there was not what we generally call fear in it, and wondered.

"I accept," said Captain Brocken, looking up; "and now bid your gallant captain look to his treacherous foe."

"You take an interest in him?" said Ira, with a dubious smile.

"What matters to you whether I take an interest in him or not?" replied the pirate, sternly.

Ira moved away, and as he did so old Cut-

ten stumped past with a very wooden expression upon his particularly wooden countenance.

"I hope he has heard nothing," muttered Ira. "Pooh, of course he has not."

But Cutten had heard a deal, and, like all low, cunning natures, had at once conceived a notion of making use of it.

Harry received the warning from Ira with all the attention that it deserved, and as the ships were within a quarter of a mile of each other, quickly bade the men to stand to their guns.

"If he means treachery," he muttered, "I——"

What he would have said was never spoken, for the Spaniard interrupted it with a broadside, which, on the whole, was fairly aimed.

Some of the rigging was cut away and five men fell—three in death and two with gaping wounds.

With such a stern expression as had never been seen on Harry's face, he rose to his feet.

Indignation gave him strength and voice, and he thundered out:

"Death to the treacherous hounds!"

The Belevvedere answered with a well-directed broadside, and a volley of execrations fouled the air.

More shots came back—wild again in aim—and then the vessels crashed together.

"Death to the treacherous hounds!" again cried Harry.

For the time his old strength and fire seemed to be given him.

His face flushed, his eyes blazed and his cutlass flashed. With a bound he sprang upon the Spaniard's deck.

He was followed by Samson, Ching-Ching, Ira, Tom and others, among whom, to the surprise of everybody, was Witta, the wise man, carrying a huge club and bearing his Bettie tucked under his left arm.

"Wuroo! wuroo!" he cried, and what he lacked in science he made up in fury. He dealt tremendous blows with his club on every side.

The Spaniards made some show of fighting, for they were like rats penned into a corner, but the only real exhibition of pluck

was made by the officers, about a dozen in number.

They had some of the fire of that nation which once was the most potent in the world, and now is one of the least powerful. Spanish swords are like Spanish bonds—worthless.

They cut a gay figure, these Spanish officers, in their velvet jackets, turbans and gaudy sashes, with their black eyes flashing with fury, and their swords glittering as they cut right and left, and yet into their midst dashed one sick man, who scattered them like chaff.

It was Handsome Harry, burning with indignation at the treachery with which he had been assailed. He forgot all his weakness—all that he had suffered—everything except that he had a dastard foe to deal with, and the cutlass which had cut short so many lives dealt death to the Spaniards.

"His right hand has not lost its cunning," muttered Tom, glancing at him for a moment. There were others hovering around over him, but he had need of help from none, the only aid required was for those he fell upon.

Of Ching-Ching and Samson much need not be said, except that they did their duty pleasantly, as usual, giving most terrible cuts and thrusts, accompanied with a joke as a sort of salve to the wound, but whether their quips and cranks had this effect we are unable to say.

Witta also distinguished himself, especially after he lost his club, and used Bettie as a weapon. The very hideousness of that sweet image half terrified the Spaniards, but when they felt its weight they bowed before it.

At last he got into queer street by falling over a prostrate foe. A Spanish officer, who had watched his career, and thirsted to have an interview with him, rushed forward with a yell. The next moment would have been Witta's last but for Ching-Ching, who cropped up from somewhere, apparently out of the deck, and, thrusting his head into the pit of the officer's stomach, tossed him into the air.

He turned a fair somersault and came down heavily upon the boards, where he lay engaged in a very confused mental arithmetic.

tic as to how many men were before and behind him and waltzing about the air.

Victory was with the Belvederes, and the Spaniards, such as were living, turned tail, plunging overboard and making for the shore. In two minutes more the fight was over, and then reaction fell upon Handsome Harry.

He fell upon the deck, pale and almost lifeless, and Tom and Ira rushed to his aid.

"It is nothing," he gasped. "I am a little faint only; give me some water."

"Have a little of this," said Ira, producing a flask.

Harry took a few drops and then sat up with a smile upon his pale, handsome face.

"I had no idea," he said, "that I was so weak."

"You are not fit for this work yet," returned Tom.

"And yet the work is done," said Harry, looking about him, "and well done; the treacherous dogs are defeated. My men fought well, as they always do. Belvederes, I thank you."

These words were sweet to the ears of the few men, blood-stained, hot and tired, who were standing by, and all saluted in acknowledgment of the praise.

"Where is Samson?" asked Harry. "Has aught happened to him?"

"He's there with the Chinee chap," said Bill Grunt, pointing to the lower deck, "and I think that Ching-Ching has done for himself now."

"What's the matter?" asked Harry, with more interest than Bill Grunt expected to see.

"Why, he butted an officer, and he's broken his neck."

"See to him, Tom," said Harry; "I'm all right now."

Tom hurried over to the little group of which Samson and Ching-Ching were the centre. The unfortunate Ching-Ching was lying at full length, with his head and neck in such a position as left no doubt about the injury he had received.

A sailor was holding on to each foot, and Samson was tugging away with all his might, Ching-Ching superintending the operations vocally.

"Dat right, Sammy," he said, "get good

grip an' pull away. I feel de bones comin' out—you fellers stick to my feet—what de good ob you. Anoder lilly pull and gib him a wriggle a bit. Dat de trick."

And with a noise similar to that made by a bottle-jack, when it gets to the length of its tether, Ching-Ching's head shot up about two inches, and he was restored.

"Wal! I never seed anything like that," exclaimed one of the seamen.

"Nor did I," said Tom to himself, and, pushing forward, he took a long, steady look at our eccentric friend.

"What are you made of?" he said at last.

"Bout de same sort of stuff as most men," replied Ching-Ching, complacently.

"But your neck isn't."

"What de marrer wif it, Massa Tom?"

"Why, any other neck would have been broken."

"Dis neck ob mine am noting to one I know ob," said Ching-Ching; "it not belong to any relation ob mine, so you needn't look at me in that specteous manner, Massa Tom—dat neck de property ob my farder's—"

"Brother, in course," put in Bill Grunt.

"No, it wasn't."

"Then it was his uncle."

"Wrong again, Massa Grunt."

"Then it was his father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, fust, second or third cousin," insisted Bill Grunt, running off a volley of relationships.

"All wrong, sar," said Ching-Ching, cheerfully; "dat neck am de property ob my farder's nex'-door neighbor, a genlyman ob high standing, whose farder was hung for kicking a mandarin right trough a shop-window when him looking in. De neck ob dis man was so strong dat he allus butt ebrybody, and he used to go out ebry morning and knock de people 'bout like skittles. Dere was neber less dan eleven people ob all sorts and sizes lyin' about de street at one time."

"There is allus one lyin' here," muttered Bill.

Ching-Ching scorned to notice the interruption, and went on:

"Dere wasn't one man in our street as hadn't been knocked down once, and some twice, some tree times, and one feeble ole man, who took de air for him health, spent

most ob him time on him back, for dis nex'-door neighbor used to wait on him heavy."

"I wonder you can stay here and listen to them lies," said Bill Grunt, generally; but they all stayed on, nevertheless, and Bill stayed too.

"Dis was de state ob tings," continued Ching-Ching, "when my farder come to lib dere, and de berry fust night, when him was movin' de furniture in, and was staggerin' into de house wif a basket load ob clothing, dis nex'-door neighbor come up behind and butt him at one blow right trough de house, out ob de back door, into a barge going down de canal behind. De boatman not see my farder come, and go on. My farder lie insensible, and not wake up until he were twenty mile away."

"Oh, come!" said Bill Grunt, "he must have heerd——"

"Order, there," interposed Tom; "hear the story first, and make your comments afterward."

"Hear—hear!" cried the listeners, and Bill Grunt collapsed.

"My farder," pursued Ching-Ching, "walk back, and when he come to de house he find dat de nex'-door neighbor had been butting cber since; all de furniture was scatter 'bout, my moder was in de coal cellar, I was swimming 'bout in de water-butt, and de two men who brought the furniture were lying doubled up on de oposite side ob de road, and de nex'-door neighbor was takin' de wind out ob de horses fast. 'Dis won't do,' my farder says, and up agin a post he goes. 'Hallo, dere, you butter,' my farder says. De nex'-door neighbor turn on him libely. 'You back?' he says, and den he rush at my farder, who pop out ob de way and gib him de post."

"Dat post," said Ching-Ching, looking around solemnly, "was too much for him. It send him head and neck bang into him body, so dat only de top ob him head was eber seen afterward."

"Oh, but it killed him?" said Bill Grunt, led involuntarily into controversy again.

"Oh, no," said Ching-Ching, softly; "he libe for years. I lef him alive."

Defeated and disgraced, the boatswain retired, and the triumphant Ching-Ching, with his neck restored, helped with the wounded.

Then friends and foes were, as usual, moved to the Belvedere. After this was done the muster roll was called.

Five dead and seven wounded of the Belvedere.

Not much when the numerical power of the foe was considered, but more than Harry cared to lose, especially when treachery was the power which laid them low.

One man was missing, and that was the pirate, Captain Brocken, whom the men called the "Black Doctor."

Several bore witness to having seen him swim toward the shore with the Spaniards who had escaped, and one had seen him land, and alone make for the forest.

"Well, since he mistrusts us," said Harry, "let him go. Grunt, muster the men."

All save the disabled were mustered, and Harry addressed them as follows:

"My gallant men, you have fought well, but that is nothing new. Pluck and good cutlasses have carried us to another victory; but now I am about to grant you a liberty which is something new. Hitherto you have never been allowed to plunder, but I withdraw the restriction with regard to that vessel. In two hours I intend to blow her up; until that time she is yours."

This address was delivered on board the Belvedere, and it was responded to with a joyful shout. "Lower the boats!" was the cry, and the men slung them over the side; but there were two who did not wait to be conveyed by this medium, as the vessels were not twenty yards apart.

"Come on, Sammy!" cried Ching-Ching.

"All right, Chingy."

The pair went head first over the side, and had reached the Spanish craft before the boats of the Belvedere had fairly touched the water. Bill Grunt and Cutten had cold drops of apprehension on their brows.

"There won't be anything worth sixpence aboard if you give that Chineese chap five minutes," said Bill. "Pull away, lads."

Harry and his head officers remained behind to look after the wounded, none of them having the least desire to share in the plunder; but it was natural for the sailors to like a little loot, and they enjoyed the privilege granted them.

By the time the boats reached the prize Ching-Ching was stuffed like a pin cushion, and he and Sammy were making up a large bundle of jewel-hilted rapiers and pistols with gold-mounted stocks—a glorious prize. These they found in the grand saloon, which they had rummaged with magical celerity.

"Tie 'em up tight, Sammy," said Ching-Ching, "and p'r'aps Massa Grunt help us to carry dem back."

Mr. William Grunt at once flatly refused to do anything of the sort, and set about looking up something for himself. There was enough and to spare for every man, but for a long time no money was found.

Now, a Spanish ship is seldom without ready cash, and every man considered that coin was hidden somewhere. An hour and a half had elapsed, and the time for loot was fast expiring. Hotter and more eager grew the search; lockers, cupboards, and places likely to be used for hiding places were rummaged again and again.

"I quite tired out, Sammy," said Ching-Ching, throwing himself down upon a couch. "Hallo! what dat?"

A slight, musical chink, full of promise, fell upon his ears. Taking out his knife he ripped up the couch, and there, under some wool, lay fat, cheerful-looking packets of doubloons.

"Quick, dat sack!" cried Ching-Ching, breathless.

Samson up with a sack lying near, and held its mouth open. For two minutes only had they the cabin to themselves, and then some of the crew rushed in.

A general scramble ensued, but Samson and his friend had already secured a third of a sackful. Bill Grunt got two packets, but Cutten arrived on the scene too late.

"Return signal!" roared one of the men.

The boats were laden with treasure, and performed their journeys thrice before all was on board the Belvedere. Samson and Ching-Ching stowed theirs away in the cabin; the other men did the best they could, but each man respected his neighbor's property.

It was a strange medley of plunder. Doubloons, swords, cutlasses, pistols, muskets, candlesticks, jewelry and furniture. Ching-Ching and Samson each brought an easychair. Witta, alone of all on board, got nothing, as he, overpowered by his late exertions, had been sleeping peacefully beside Bettie. Great was his wrath and indignation when he heard what had been going on, but the present of a brass candlestick and a pair of tin snuffers from the artful Ching-Ching quite appeased him.

"Dey berry wallyble," said that worthy; "de only ones on board, and me not gib dem to any man but you. Samson know dat."

Samson thought that no other man would have accepted them, but he did not say so, and Witta retired delighted.

The plunder over, a firing party was dispatched to the Spaniard, with instructions to place a powder train and slow match near the magazine. Then the Belvedere sheered off, and stood by about two miles distant. A number of Spaniards took heart and came down to the beach.

Just as a few of the bravest were making preparations to swim out, a low, rumbling sound was heard, and the Spanish ship was lifted into the air. It parted into ten thousand fragments, which scattered far and wide, leaving no recognizable portion of the once stately ship to give the record of her fate.

[THE END.]

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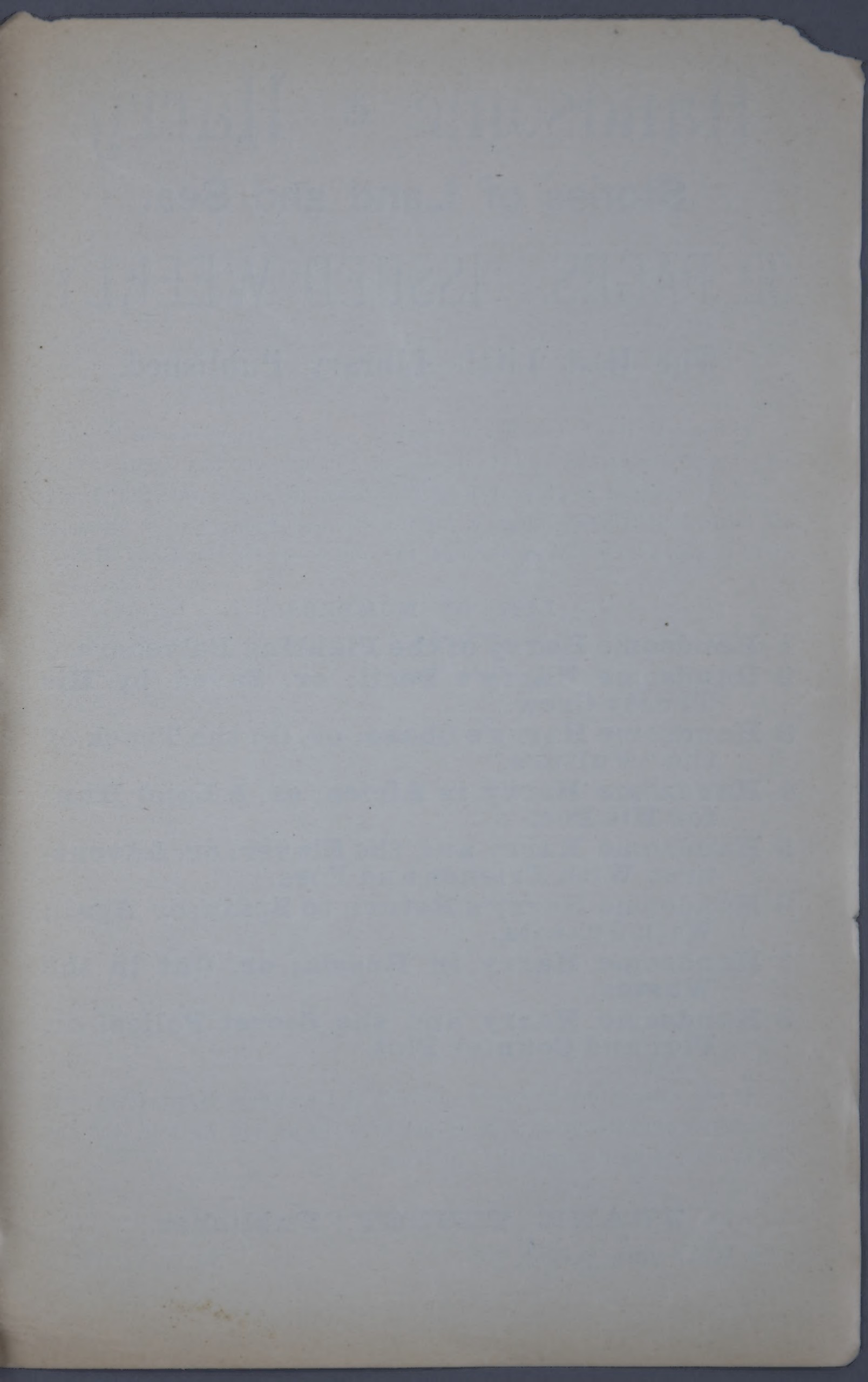
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